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U.S. Calls In Envoy Over Haitian Arms

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 30 —

Haiti's Ambassador to the United States, Robert Théard, was summoned to the State Department this morning to explain the purchase of firearms in the United States by the Haitian consul general in New York, Andre Eli.

The Ambassador was summoned to the department for an interview with Kennedy Crockett, director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs, after the publication in The New York Times today of an article on Haitian arms purchases. The article said the records of the Miami Police Department showed that Mr. Eli had purchased at least 257 revolvers in the last two years from Miami arms dealers alone.

According to State Department officials, Mr. Théard acknowledged that Mr. Eli had been buying revolvers for five years and sending them as gifts to friends in Haiti.

The State Department announced that the matter of Mr. Eli's purchases was being "actively pursued with the Haitian Government." The transporting of firearms and other weapons from the United States without an export license is a violation of United States laws.

State Department officials said that no licenses had been issued to Mr. Eli for sending the revolvers out of the United States. Other informed quarters said it was presumed that the weapons were being smuggled out of the country and that they were intended for the use of the militia of Haiti's President, Dr. Francois Duvalier.

Mr. Eli's problems are part of the larger issue of what officials here have described as the persistent efforts of the Duvalier regime to obtain weapons in the United States in the face of a virtual embargo imposed by the State Department on the shipment of arms to Haiti.

Despite this embargo, two T-28 bomber-fighter training aircraft were illegally flown to Haiti last September in an operation that officials here believe was directed by the Haitian consul general in Miami, Eugene Bessan.

Several agencies of the United States Government are investigating Mr. Baboun and a number of his Haitian and American associates in connection with the T-28. The Administration, however, is not willing to produce a "mystery witness" whose testimony is considered crucial if prosecution is sought.

Robert J. McCloskey, the State Department's spokesman, refused today to say whether such a witness existed. He did say, however, that if such a witness existed, he was not an official of the State Department.

Other qualified sources maintained that this witness was a former employee of the Central Intelligence Agency and that the agency had successfully sought to block his testimony so its intelligence techniques would not be revealed.

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According to informants, this witness is an armorer who had gone to Haiti to arm the two T-28's, and is thus in a position to identify the aircraft as the same ones purchased in Miami by persons believed to be Mr. Baboun's associates. The aircraft are now in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital.

Officials said today that no decision had been made whether any action might be taken against Mr. Eli in connection with the alleged illegal dispatch of the revolvers to Haiti.

It was indicated, however, that as a part of the over-all investigation, the Government might again look into the reported illegal transport late in 1962 of 600 M-1 rifles from Miami. That operation is also believed to have been directed by Mr. Baboun and one of his relatives. At the time, at least three rifles were seized from crewmen of a Haitian warship then visiting Miami. No prosecution has been attempted, however, for an apparent lack of conclusive evidence.

Officials could not explain why Mr. Eli has identified himself as a consul in Miami in filling out the firearms-registration forms that are now in the records of the Police Department. He has been stationed in New York for a number of years. It was pointed out, however, that misrepresentation on the registration forms might constitute a misdemeanor.

The records showed that Mr. Eli had been buying revolvers in Miami between June 11, 1963, and Dec. 18 of this year. He often bought as many as 10 or more at a time. The purpose of the purchases was described on the cards as "gift." Mr. Eli had been buying out the cards.

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